

## Message Text

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67

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-10 AID-05 SR-02 ORM-01

FDRE-00 /080 W

----- 123723

O R 041740Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4763

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY DJAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

USDEL JEC PARIS

CINCPAC

UNCLAS SAIGON 04281

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, VS

SUBJECT: ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT THIEU -

NGUYEN BA CAN TO FORM NEW CABINET

1. IN AN ADDRESS TO THE NATION ON APRIL 4, PRESIDENT THIEU BEGAN BY REVIEWING MILITARY SITUATION OF RECENT WEEKS. STATING THAT AT OUTSET HE BELIEVED BAN ME THUOT WAS IMPORTANT CAPITAL IN CENTRAL HIGHLANDS AND THEREFORE WORTH DEFENDING, HE NOTED THAT KONTUM AND PLEIKU BY CONTRAST WERE ISOLATED AND DIFFICULT TO SUPPLY. AFTER CONSULTATION WITH MILITARY LEADERSHIP, HE SAID HE DECIDED TO WITHDRAW FROM BOTH OF THOSE LOCATIONS IN ORDER

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TO DEFEND ENTIRE PROVINCE IN WHICH BAN ME THUOT SITUATED.

DESPITE A VALIANT FIGHT BY RVN FORCES AT BMT, OVERWHELMING SUPERIORITY OF COMMUNIST FORCES MEANT THAT ENTIRE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS HAD TO BE GIVEN UP. IN OTHER PLACES SUCH AS HUE AND QUANG TRI, THE PRESIDENT SAID HE ORDERED THAT THEY BE DEFENDED TO LAST MAN. HOWEVER, TREMENDOUS ENEMY PRESSURE MADE THAT IMPOSSIBLE. THE SOLDIERS WITHDRAWING FROM HUE TO DANANG COULD NOT REORGANIZE AND THE LARGE INFLUX OF REFUGEES COMBINED WITH ENEMY SHELLING PRODUCED WIDESPREAD PANIC. IN COASTAL LOWLANDS, PRESIDENT MAINTAINED THAT SOLDIERS FOUGHT COURAGEOUSLY BUT HAD TO WITHDRAW FROM BINH DINH, THEN PHU YEN AND FINALLY NHA TRANG WAS OVERRUN. THE PRESIDENT BLAMED THE FALL OF NHA TRANG ON THE LACK OF LEADERSHIP AND MORALE. PRESENT THIEU ALSO SAID THAT THE UNITS THAT FOUGHT AND WITHDREW FROM CENTRAL VIETNAM HAVE NOW REGROUPED AND ARE READY TO FIGHT. HE CRITICIZED BBC FOR REPORTING THAT 100,000 SOLDIERS WERE LEFT IN DA NANG SAYING THAT THERE WERE NOT THAT MANY SOLDIERS IN DA NANG TO BEGIN WITH. HE CONCLUDED HIS REVIEW OF THE MILITARY SITUATION BY STATING THAT IF SOME UNITS HAD NOT FOUGHT AND MAINTAINED DISCIPLINE THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN EVEN GREATER LOSSES.

2. PRESIDENT DENIED THAT HE HAD MADE A DEAL WITH COMMUNISTS TO DIVIDE COUNTRY, STATING THAT HE REFUSED TO ACCEPT ANY DEAL WITH COMMUNISTS DURING LAST 10 YEARS, PRESIDENT SAID HE STILL REJECTED SETTING UP COALITION WITH COMMUNISTS AND SAID THAT THIS WAS IMMUTABLE POSITION TO WHICH HE HAD ADDRESSED HIMSELF MANY TIMES. HE SAID COMMUNISTS ARE STRONGER THAN WE ARE. THEY HAVE BETTER WEAPONS AND HAVE VIOLATED PARIS AGREEMENT AND TAKEN CONSIDERABLE TERRITORY. HOWEVER, WE DO NOT ACCEPT FACT THAT THE TERRITORY BELONGS TO THEM AND WE WILL TAKE IT BACK.

3. PRESIDENT THIEU SAID THE GVN IS PREPARED TO RETURN TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE AT PARIS WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS. HOWEVER, HE MAINTAINED THAT AS LONG AS COMMUNISTS WERE ATTACKING RVN WOULD FIGHT BACK. HE ALSO SAID HE WAS PREPARED TO DISCUSS SETTING UP COUNCIL OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION, GENERAL ELECTIONS AND ANYTHING COVERED BY PARIS AGREEMENT BUT THE COMMUNISTS MUST NOT CONTINUE TO USE FORCE AS THEY HAVE IN LAST TWO YEARS.

4. NOTING THAT RVN STILL RETAINED CONTROL OVER SEVERAL PROVINCES IN MR II AND ALL OF MR III AND MR IV, PRESIDENT THIEU VOWED TO  
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DEFEND ALL TERRITORY NOW UNDER RVN CONTROL AND CALLED UPON PEOPLE TO SUPPORT WAR EFFORT. PRESIDENT BLAMED MUCH OF WHAT HE TERMED SAD SITUATION IN MR I AND MR II ON COMMUNIST INFILTRATION BY SAPPERS WHO MADE CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO CAUSE PANIC AMONG PEOPLE AND SOLDIERS. HE ENCOURAGED EVERYONE TO LISTEN TO THE GVN FOR ANNOUNCEMENTS AND MAINTAIN DISCIPLINE AND ORDER--AND ABOVE ALL TO REMAIN CALM.

5. AS FOR REFUGEE SITUATION, PRESIDENT NOTED THAT 1968 AND 1972 OFFENSIVES PROVIDED VALUABLE EXPERIENCE IN CARING FOR REFUGEES AND ADDED THAT HE HAD CALLED UPON FRIENDLY NATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS FOR ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES. HE ALSO SAID EVERY ATTEMPT WOULD BE MADE TO HELP THE REFUGEES CAUGHT BEHIND ENEMY LINES ESCAPE TO THE RVN CONTROLLED AREAS. NOTING THAT "NOBODY LOVES US" PRESIDENT DECLARED THAT WE MUST RELY ON OURSELVES FOR SURVIVAL.

6. STRESSING THAT RUMORS ARE PLANTED BY UNDERGROUND COMMUNISTS, PRESIDENT THIEU STATED THAT ENEMY WOULD LIKE NOTHING BETTER THAN TO DESTROY CONSTITUTIONALLY BASED GOVERNMENT IN SOUTH VIETNAM. THEY THEREFORE EXPEND CONSIDERABLE ENERGY SOWING DISSENSION AND THEIR LACKEYS ASSIST THEM IN DEMANDING A COALITION GOVERNMENT. HE STATED THAT PEOPLE SHOULD NOT BE LURED INTO DIVISIVE ACTIVITY OR A COUP D'ETAT. PRESIDENT SAID WE MUST KEEP CONSTITUTIONAL CHARACTER OF GVN IN ORDER TO USE IT AS BASIS FOR SUPPORT AND NEGOTIATION.

7. PRESIDENT ANNOUNCED THAT PRIME MINISTER TRAN THIEN KHIEM AND THE ENTIRE CABINET HAD RESIGNED AND HE HAD ACCEPTED THEIR RESIGNATIONS. EXTOLLING VIRTUES OF "STRUGGLE GOVERNMENT" HE SAID HE HAD ASKED LOWER HOUSE SPEAKER NGUYEN BA CAN TO SET UP NEW CABINET.

8. LOOKING TOWARD FUTURE, PRESIDENT THIEU CHARACTERIZED CURRENT COMMUNIST OFFENSIVE AS PROOF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ATTACKS CONSTITUTED AGGRESSION FROM WITHOUT AND NOT CIVIL WAR AS SOME AMERICANS BELIEVED. HE SAID WHEN RVN SIGNED PARIS AGREEMENT, U.S. PROMISED THAT IT WOULD REACT STRONGLY AND AT SAME TIME PROVIDE MEANS FOR SVN TO PROTECT ITS FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY IN EVENT OF NORTH VIETNAMESE ATTACK. PRESIDENT CHARGED HOWEVER THAT SINCE PARIS AGREEMENT, THIS UNCLASSIFIED

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PROMISE HAS NOT BEEN KEPT. AID HAS BEEN REDUCED HE COMPLAINED AND REMAINS REDUCED EVEN THOUGH THE NORTH VIETNAMESE HAVE LAUNCHED A MASSIVE OFFENSIVE. HE SAID VIETNAMESE PEOPLE ARE SHOCKED THAT U.S. HAS NOT KEPT COMMITMENT FOR ONE TO ONE REPLACEMENT ACCORDING TO PARIS AGREEMENT. THE FACT THAT WE HAVE LESS FIREPOWER THAN BEFORE HAS HURT MORALE AND CONFIDENCE OF SOLDIERS, HE MAINTAINED. TERMING IT AN IMPORTANT PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTOR, PRESIDENT THIEU SAID THAT RVN NEEDS 1.2 BILLION OF MILITARY EACH YEAR. IF IT ONLY GETS ONE HALF OF THAT THEN IT CAN ONLY PROTECT ONE HALF OF ITS TERRITORY. PRESIDENT COMPLAINED THAT AMERICANS WITHDREW AND LEFT THE RVN TO FIGHT AND THEN CUT AID IN HALF--THAT IS ILLOGICAL, HE DECLARED.

9. PRESIDENT CONCLUDED BY REMINDING HIS AUDIENCE THAT HE HAD

INFORMED RECENT U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION OF ALL OF THESE FACTORS AND HOPED THAT U.S. PEOPLE AND CONGRESS WOULD NOT SEE WHAT ACTUAL REQUIREMENTS WERE AS WELL AS THE RESULT OF THEIR POLICY OF LAST TWO YEARS.

10. PRESIDENT THIEU'S APPEARANCE WAS FRESH AND HIS DELIVERY STRONG AND MORE CONFIDENT THAN IN ANY OF HIS RECENT APPEARANCES. MARTIN

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